

United States Senate

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COMMITTEES:

ARMED SERVICES

COMMERCE, SCIENCE
AND TRANSPORTATION

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

July 27, 2010

Ms. Michelle Leonhart
Acting Administrator
Drug Enforcement Administration
8701 Morrisette Drive
Springfield, VA 22152

Dr. Howard K. Koh
Assistant Secretary for Health
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Acting Administrator Leonhart and Assistant Secretary Koh:

I write today concerning the growing number of health incidents involving herbal smoking blends treated with synthetic cannabinoids, known commonly as "Spice". I respectfully request the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) work expeditiously to analyze and determine appropriate scheduling of the various cannabinoids found in these and other similar products.

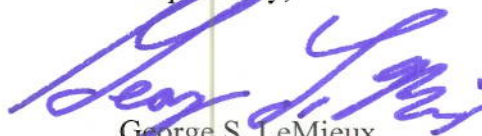
The DEA currently lists five known cannabinoids found in such products as chemicals of concern. Although there are five chemicals listed, only one chemical, HU-210, is currently classified as a Schedule I controlled substance. It is also apparent from the absence of comprehensive federal regulations on the matter that we know very little regarding the use and distribution of products containing the cannabinoids in question.

As a result of a growing number of calls received by regional poison control centers, several state and local governments have enacted laws banning the sale of products like Spice. According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, there have been 607 calls to U.S. poison centers since January 1, 2010; a dramatic increase compared to the 13 calls recorded in 2009.

It is my understanding that the DEA has commenced an initial investigation, and the formal scheduling process can take over a year to complete. In light of the surge in adverse reports associated with use of these products, efforts by multiple states to ban its sale and an overall lack of information regarding the extent of abuse and illicit distribution, expedited analysis by DEA and HHS is warranted.

I thank you for your consideration of this matter and look forward to your response.

Respectfully,



George S. LeMieux
United States Senator